



**CONTRA COSTA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY REPORT NO. 1712
"More Shelter Beds Needed for the Homeless in Contra Costa County"**

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' RESPONSE

FINDINGS – California Penal Code Section 933.05(a) requires a response to the designated findings of the Grand Jury.

F1. There is a shortage of low-income housing in the County.

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

F2. Because of very little affordable housing availability, the County's emergency shelters and CARE centers are vital resources to the homeless.

Response: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. CARE Centers and County emergency shelters are critical components of an effective crisis response system for persons who experience an unexpected housing crisis – which may arise with or without respect to the availability of affordable housing.

F3. The County is dependent on HUD for grants that provide the bulk of the money expended by the County to help the homeless.

Response: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. HUD grants contribute significantly to the Health Services Department Health, Housing, and Homeless Services Division's budget. However, as budgeted for fiscal year 2017-18, HUD grants are projected to provide about 29% of the anticipated funding needed to support homeless services programs. County contributions, an intradepartmental partnership with the Mental Health Division that provides Mental Health Services Act funding, and an interdepartmental partnership with the Employment and Human Services Department that provides CalWorks funding are other significant contributions that support homeless service programs.

F4. Regulatory compliance associated with the receipt of HUD funds results in an administrative cost to the County, which is not fully reimbursed by HUD.

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

F5. The County structures its homeless programs to meet local needs and in accordance with HUD compliance mandates.

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

F6. East County lacks an emergency shelter that is operated by the County.

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

F7. East County has a CARE center that is run by a non-profit.

Response: The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding. An East County CARE Center has not been established.

F8. West County has an emergency shelter that is operated by the County.

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

F9. West County lacks a CARE center that is operated by the County.

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding. The CARE Center in West County is operated by a non-profit agency.

F10. Central County has an emergency shelter that is operated by the County.

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

F11. Central County has a CARE center that is operated by the County.

Response: The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding. The Central County CARE Center is operated by a non-profit agency.

F12. Caring for the homeless is expensive; reducing these costs through better shelter and primary medical care could provide savings.

Response: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. Providing short-term interventions such as shelter or emergency health care services for those experiencing chronic homelessness is expensive. Reducing these costs through long-term solutions such as permanent supportive housing, that includes primary medical care, could provide a savings.

F13. Better shelter and primary medical care could reduce the costs associated with caring for the homeless.

Response: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. Permanent housing with supportive services could reduce the costs associated with providing care for persons experiencing homelessness.

F14. Recently implemented Coordinated Entry helps improve the coordination of homeless services.

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

F15. Through its new Health, Housing, and Homeless Services division, Health Services is the responsible County department for reducing homelessness.

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

F16. The recently implemented Coordinated Entry helps homeless people obtain services they need.

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

F17. The success of Coordinated Entry is partly dependent upon the creation of more County-operated emergency shelters and beds.

Response: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. The success of Coordinated Entry not only relies on the expansion of short-term shelter beds, but also on increasing the availability of permanent housing that is affordable.

F18. The County's CORE Outreach dispatch may be called by police departments to help the homeless obtain services instead of other costly alternatives such as taking them to emergency room or, in some cases, arresting them.

Response: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. Police departments may reach CORE outreach dispatch through 211, instead of other costly alternatives such as emergency medical services or arrest and/or detention.

F19. The County funds CORE teams and a central dispatch to facilitate coordination of services for the homeless.

Response: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. The cities of Martinez, Pleasant Hill, Walnut Creek, and Concord also provide funding for the CORE teams, as well as the Community Development Block Grant entitlement jurisdictions of Pittsburg and Antioch. Additionally, Sutter Health community benefit program has invested in CORE outreach teams. These partnerships strengthen the County's ability to create and maintain this resource in the community.

F20. The lack of enough overnight shelter beds may prevent the Coordinated Entry CARE Centers and CORE Outreach teams from being as effective as they otherwise could be.

Response: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. Lack of shelter capacity, as well as, the lack of availability of affordable, permanent housing can impact the effectiveness of the CARE Center and CORE outreach teams.

F21. Shelter Inc. has an existing master lease program that has been effective in creating more housing for those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

F22. There are increasing numbers of homeless seniors in the County.

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

F23. Existing County-operated emergency shelters are not prepared to handle frail seniors, who may not be able to take care of themselves, for example seniors with dementia or those who are unable to take care of activities of daily living.

Response: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. The County operated shelters are equipped to only support persons capable of self-care, regardless of age. For homeless individuals who may need short-term recuperative care after being discharged from the hospital, the County operated Respite Shelter, supported by a full-time nurse, is available.

F24. There are a wide variety of innovative experiments throughout the nation that may be feasible for implementation in the County.

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS - California Penal Code Section 933.05(b) requires a response to the designated recommendations of the Grand Jury.

R1. The County Board of Supervisors (BOS) should consider instructing the Health Services Department to create and present a proposal outlining the cost of opening and running a shelter with emergency beds in East County.

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The County is aware of the costs of operating a County shelter, as it operates four shelter facilities throughout Central and West County. The cost of an East County facility would not vary significantly. However, the County is not the only entity that can provide shelter services in Contra Costa and values public/private partnerships with community-based agencies that operate shelter services in the community.

R2. The BOS should consider finding a funding source to create and maintain a County-operated shelter in East County.

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The County wholly funds the Don Brown Shelter in East County that is operated by the non-profit organization, Anka Behavioral Health. The Don Brown Shelter will soon expand its capacity from 20 beds to 32 beds.

R3. The BOS should consider finding a funding source to create and maintain a County-operated CARE center in East County.

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. A funding source has already been identified to create and maintain a CARE Center in East County. The East County CARE center will be operated by a non-profit agency in line with other CARE centers operated by CBO's within the continuum of care.

R4. The BOS should consider finding a sustainable funding source to increase the number of beds in existing County-operated shelters.

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. All County-operated shelters are at maximum occupancy set forth by the planning and fire department.

R5. The BOS should consider finding a sustainable funding source to set up additional County-operated CARE centers.

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. An East County CARE center is in its pre-development stage and is expected to be operated by a non-profit agency and open in 2018. It will be funded in part by the County. The County works in partnership with non-profit organizations to deliver critical components of the homeless system of care. It is not necessary or always best that the County provides direct services.

R6. The BOS should consider expanding master lease programs.

Response: This recommendation has been implemented by the Health Services Health, Housing, and Homeless Services program as funding and unit availability permits. Master-lease programs are particularly effective in supporting chronically homeless individuals with a complexity of needs.

R7. The BOS should consider looking for opportunities to create additional shelter beds by using unused warehouses, commercial buildings, or motels to make best use of existing unoccupied structures.

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. The County has explored opportunities to create additional shelter beds through the expansion of existing facilities. The Don Brown Shelter, located in Antioch and operated by the non-profit organization, Anka Behavioral Health, is undergoing a facility expansion and will soon increase its capacity from 20 beds to 32 beds. The County provides funding for the operations of this shelter.

R8. The BOS should consider asking the Health Services Department to create a plan for those frail homeless seniors who are demented or unable to take care of activities of daily living.

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented as it is not warranted. The homeless system of care is not the best place to support persons who may suffer from dementia or unable to take care of their activities of daily living. Other County departments and divisions within and outside of the Health Services Department may be better positioned to support the housing and service needs of adults and older adults with significant impairments. Referrals are made as necessary to these programs.